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Wolcott

Although I am speaking in favor of HB5078 and HB5331, I am against Common Core and using student test scores in teacher evaluation.

My life has been dedicated to education. I retired from teaching in 2009 after a 37 year career. In 1991 I was honored as Wolcott's Teacher of the Year and a semifinalist for CT Teacher of the Year. I served on the Wolcott Board of Education but decided not to seek reelection this past November. I could not be part of the bureaucracy foisting wrong-headed education policy on our students and teachers. I felt I could better help educate the public as a private citizen activist.

I am here because I am also the grandmother of two precious baby girls who will be entering kindergarten in 3 and 4 years and I worry that their natural enthusiasm for learning will be extinguished by what our schools are being forced to do.

I am here to speak for the thousands of educators who are demoralized, afraid to speak up, and couldn't be here because they are teaching.

I am here for the students who are being denied the inspiring, exciting, and joyful education they deserve.

I am here because I hardly recognize my profession.

Common Core proponents say this initiative was state led and not a federal attempt to dictate national standards, but we all know that by dangling NCLB waivers and RTTT money the federal government is very much the driver of this initiative.

At the February 28 hearing Mr. Minnich of the CCSSO wanted it on the record that teachers were very much involved in the development of the standards but that is simply not true. David Coleman, the acknowledged architect of the Common Core, is not an educator. None of the writers were teachers. There were only three teachers on the 29 member validation committee. Everything was done behind closed doors so even if some teachers might have seen the drafts, there's no way to tell if their input was included in the output. How did it happen that people of influence, like Coleman, and people with deep pockets, like Bill Gates, who paid for the development of the standards, were allowed to determine the course of public education in America?

Dr. Gillis spoke in favor of the standards for our youngest students. I would refer you to the 2010 Joint Statement of Early Childhood Health and Education Professionals

(http://www.edweek.org/media/joint_statement_on_core_standards.pdf) signed by more than 500 early childhood experts explaining that the standards were developmentally inappropriate for our youngest students. There was no response to their input.

Diane Ravitch, the leading education historian in the country in her latest book ***Reign of Error***, states that using test data to determine teacher effectiveness is not supported by data and research. The research is clear: at most, teaching accounts for about 15 percent of student achievement outcomes, while socioeconomic factors account for about 60 percent.

No other nation tests students every year. No other nation ties teacher evaluation to student test scores.

Attorney Wendy Lecker states in the Stamford Advocate that in 2010 the CSDE compared existing Connecticut academic standards, to the Common Core State Standards. They found that 92 percent of Connecticut's math standards overlapped with the Common Core math standards.

So why are we spending all this money and ceding state and local control to copyrighted national standards when our standards were very good to begin with and we had the flexibility to make changes?

Where is the evidence that implementing the Common Core standards will achieve the predicted outcomes?

What is the total cost of implementation and is it really worth the money? What will have to be sacrificed to pay for this experiment?

In closing, I contend that the billions of dollars that have been spent on all this testing since NCLB and the billions being expended on the implementation of Common Core would have been much better spent directly on children. Directing these billions to the under resourced schools in our poverty stricken communities would have had a greater effect on closing the achievement gap.

Our students are being tested to death, and the death I'm talking about is the death of the true love of learning. We have to change course and you, the legislators, are the ones with the power to do that.